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ABSTRACT

Research in America on sex role attitudes and beliefs tends to neglect the views of minorities. While there is some research on the sex role attitudes of Chinese Americans, little is known about Japanese American attitudes and beliefs. To assess and compare Japanese and Caucasian American college students' attitudes, a questionnaire assessing values related to men's and women's roles in family and work contexts was administered to 244 Japanese American and 99 Caucasian college students. The results revealed that while all groups tended to be more liberated than traditional, they also maintained some relatively traditional beliefs. Japanese and Caucasian men differed significantly in their beliefs regarding women's place in the home, working women's homemaking and childcare responsibilities, sex differences in abilities related to homemaking and childcare, and men's capacity for enjoyment of homemaking and childcare. Japanese and Caucasian women differed significantly in their beliefs regarding women's capacity to handle the responsibilities of both career and home, potential effects of wife's employment on marital adjustment, their own potential for enjoying the role of a full-time housewife, shared roles in marriage, potential effects of househusband roles on masculinity, women's primary responsibilities, comparative male/female suitability for housework and childcare, and equal rights and responsibilities. Japanese American beliefs and attitudes towards male and female roles can be seen as reflecting both traditional Japanese ideals and the realities of early immigrant life and work in America. (NRB)

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Male/Female Role Values:

A Comparison Of Caucasian And Japanese American College Students*

by

John W. Engel**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess Japanese and Caucasian American college student attitudes toward various dimensions of men and women's work/family roles, and to identify differences in their beliefs and attitudes. While all groups tended to be more "liberated" than traditional, they also maintained some relatively traditional beliefs. Japanese and Caucasian men were found to differ significantly in their beliefs regarding: women's place in the home, working women's homemaking and childcare responsibilities, sex differences in abilities related to homemaking and childcare, and men's capacity for enjoyment of homemaking and childcare. Japanese and Caucasian women were found to differ significantly in their beliefs regarding: women's capacity to handle the responsibilities of both career and home, potential effects of wife's employment on marital adjustment, their own potential for enjoying the role of a full-time housewife, shared roles in marriage, potential effects of househusband roles on masculinity, women's primary responsibilities, comparative male/female suitability for housework and childcare, and equal rights and responsibilities. Japanese American beliefs and attitudes towards male and female roles were seen as reflecting both traditional Japanese ideals and the realities of early immigrant life and work in America.

Male/Female Role Values:

A Comparison Of Caucasian And Japanese American College Students

Male and female role behaviors in work and family life appear to be changing in America. Women no longer limit their activities to homemaking and childcare. Indeed, women are joining the labor force in record numbers. And American men appear to be accepting relatively more responsibility for home and family than they did in the past. Concerns about possible effects of such changes on children, marriage and family, the work-place, and society have stimulated research and resulted in a growing body of literature on work-family interface.

Work/family interface research suggests that attitudes and beliefs are important variables mediating the effects of changing behaviors on individuals and families (Ferber, 1982; Gianopulos & Mitchell, 1957; Nye, 1963; and Orden & Bradburn, 1969). Men and women have been found to differ in their beliefs and attitudes related to work and family life (Agassi, 1982; Engel, 1980); and such differences may be the source of conflicts at work and home (Gianopulos & Mitchell, 1957; Staines, Pleck, Shephard, & O'Connor, 1978). Women's career development appears to be strongly influenced by men's attitudes (Farmer & Bohn, 1970; Hawley, 1971, 1972; Spitze & Waite, 1981; and Tangri, 1972). Research on attitude change over time (e.g., Engel, 1978) suggests that American sex role ideals for men and women have changed towards greater equalitarianism and

towards increased acceptance of women's employment and men's participation in homemaking and childcare.

Research on sex role attitudes and beliefs tends to focus on middle class caucasian subjects and neglect the many minority groups that make up American society and culture. Additional research is needed to assess the sex role attitudes and beliefs of Americans of other cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and to explore variations that result from historical and cultural differences.

Asians are the fastest growing minority group in America (Associated, 1985; Hollis, 1985; Robey, 1985). When compared with Americans from other ethnic backgrounds, Asian Americans have been remarkably successful in education and business. Such success, according to the popular press, is a direct result of traditions and values taught by the Asian American family (Green, 1984; Hollis, 1985; Lewthwaite, 1983; Michaels, 1985; Shearer, 1984). Asian, particularly Confucian traditions and values usually include clear expectations for the roles of men and women. While there is some research on the sex role beliefs and attitudes of Chinese Americans (Braun & Chao, 1978; and Fong, 1973), little is known about Japanese Americans. Research is needed to determine whether Japanese Americans have the same ideals and attitudes toward men and women's work-family roles as do Caucasian Americans, or whether they differ in important ways.

The history of Japanese immigration and acculturation is well documented (Kitano & Kikumura, 1976; Ogawa, 1973, 1978; Saiki, 1985; Takaki, 1983; & Yamamoto, 1982). During the second half of the 19th

century, Japanese laborers immigrated to Hawaii and America to work on plantations and railroads. At that time, the Japanese family was extremely patriarchal, with members' roles clearly defined. According to tradition and law, the patriarch had the right to make decisions regarding marriage and divorce, adoption, family residence, and expulsion of individuals from the family. While he was responsible for supporting the family, he also could demand absolute and unconditional obedience from every family member (Masuoka, 1938). On the other hand, Japanese ideals for women's roles emphasized homemaking and the domestic arts. According to Baron Kikuchi, former Minister of Education and President of both Tokyo and Kyoto Universities:

> Our female education . . . is based on the assumption that women marry, and that its object is to fit girls to become "good wives and wise mothers." . . . [The] man goes outside to work to earn his living . . . it is the wife's part to help him, . . . by sympathy and encouragement, by relieving him of anxieties at home, managing household affairs, looking after the household economy, and, above all, tending the old people and bringing up the children in a fit and proper manner (1909:266; cited by Smith, 1983).

Between 1885 and 1907, nearly 180,000 Japanese men and women immigrated to Hawaii, usually with hopes of making a fortune and returning to Japan (Ogawa, 1978). More than half of these immigrants eventually did return to Japan (Yamamoto, 1982). Partially because of their hopes of returning to Japan, the Japanese

immigrants made special efforts to retain their culture. For example, special Japanese language and culture schools were established for children. One might expect that the Japanese immigrants would retain some of their traditional male/female role ideals along with other aspects of culture. Indeed, if Japanese experience was anything like that of the British colonials, who were sometimes described as "more British than the British," those Japanese who remained in Hawaii might retain their traditional sex role ideals longer in Hawaii than their counterparts in Japan. Thus cultural factors might influence contemporary Japanese Americans to hold relatively traditional beliefs and attitudes toward male and female roles.

On the other hand, the traditional ideals for male/female roles fit the life styles of samurai and nobleman families much more than it did peasant families (Smith, 1983). The men who immigrated to Hawaii tended to be farmers or villagers, and were often motivated by economic or other troubles at home. Immigration typically divorced men from their ancestral land and house, and undermined the ancestor worship that supported patriarchal ideals (Masuoka, 1938). The Japanese women who immigrated to Hawaii were often from the poorer classes or farm families, and as such were used to working for the family enterprise. It's not surprising, then, that they would continue to work once they arrived in Hawaii. And indeed they did work, often as hard and as many hours as their men, but for lower wages, in the sugar cane fields of the plantations. According to the 1890 census, nearly all Japanese women worked as common

laborers in the sugar cane fields. By the early 1900s, at least three sugar cane plantations in Hawaii provided child-care centers so Japanese mothers could work in the fields (Nomura, 1985). Since the reality of life in Hawaii was so far removed from that encouraged by tradition, we might expect the Japanese immigrants to gradually reject the sex role norms idealized by tradition.

Once their contracts were fulfilled, many of the Japanese workers left the plantations to go into independent farming, or other occupations such as fishing, building, or service. The Japanese eventually became one of Hawaii's most populous ethnic groups, accounting for 25 percent of the population in 1980 (State of Hawaii, 1980). Today, the Japanese Americans of Hawaii are solidly middle-class, well represented in government, civil service, teaching, social service, and medical professions (Kinzie & Furukawa, 1974).

Little is known about Japanese American sex role beliefs and attitudes. Descriptions of Japanese American families (e.g., Kitano & Kikumura, 1976) tend to neglect this area. The purpose of this study was to assess Japanese and Caucasian American college student attitudes and to identify similarities and differences in their attitudes toward various dimensions of men and women's work/family roles.

Method

A questionnaire was designed to assess values related to men and women's roles in family and work contexts. The questionnaire incorporated items used in previous research by Hewer and Neubeck (1964) and Engel (1978, 1980). Items operationalized "male/female role values" in terms of attitudes, preferences and beliefs about division of labor within the family, homemaking and childcare responsibilities, employment outside the home, role sharing and "reversal," potential effects on marriage and family members, and related topics. Subjects responded to each item by indicating whether they "agreed," were "uncertain," or "disagreed" with the statement. Demographic items assessed ethnic background, sex, age, marital status, and individual and family work histories.

Questionnaires were administered to over 500 American college students at the University of Hawaii. Subsamples of students with Japanese (N = 244) and Caucasian or European (N = 99) ancestry were selected for purposes of comparison. Of the Japanese sample, 37 percent were men, 63 percent women. Of the Caucasian sample, 42 percent were men, while 57 percent were women. The Japanese group averaged 22 years of age, the Caucasians averaged 24 years of age. On the average, the Japanese had 15 years of formal education while the Caucasians had 16 years of formal education. The majority (73 and 63 percent, respectively) of subjects were single and employed part time while going to school. Only a minority of each group (20

percent of Japanese, 32 percent of Caucasians) described their mothers as traditional (i.e., unemployed) housewives.

The data were summarized in terms of frequencies and percentages of each group who agreed or disagreed with each attitude or belief statement. Data for men and women were analyzed separately to control for sex differences. Chi-square comparisons were used to test for differences between Japanese and Caucasian groups.

Results and Discussion

The results of chi-square tests comparing Japanese and Caucasian American college student beliefs regarding women's roles are summarized in Table 1. Japanese and Caucasian men were found to differ significantly ($p < .05$) on two of ten items, while Japanese and Caucasian women were found to differ significantly on three of ten items.

Insert Table 1 about here

The majority of both Japanese and Caucasian groups rejected the traditional view of women's "place in the home" (item 1). Nevertheless, significantly ($p < .01$) more Caucasian (13 percent) than Japanese (0 percent) men believed that women's place

was (or should be) in the home.

While both Japanese and Caucasian groups tended to reject the belief (item 2) that "wives and mothers should take primary responsibility for the care of house and children, even when they work outside the home," significantly ($p < .05$) more Caucasians (64-82 percent) than Japanese (44-62 percent) disagreed with the statement. Japanese groups, particularly men, were more uncertain about this.

Most (51-55 percent) of the respondents in each group believed that "the working world is more exciting and stimulating than staying home" (item 3). However, only 36 to 45 percent of each group believed that housework and childcare are so "routine" (item 4) that women should seek employment outside the home. No significant differences were found between Japanese and Caucasian groups on these items.

Japanese and Caucasian groups tended (73-83 percent) to reject the statement that "wives/mothers . . . cannot handle the responsibilities of both home and career" (item 5). Nevertheless, a significantly ($p < .05$) higher proportion of Caucasian women (18 percent) than Japanese women (6 percent) held this belief.

According to traditional ideals, mothers were primarily responsible for childcare. They were not supposed to be employed outside the home because they might neglect their children's needs. The literature on potential effects of maternal employment on children (e.g., Hoffman & Nye, 1974; Nye & Hoffman, 1963) is extensive. The findings of this study suggest that Japanese and

Caucasian college students no longer hold traditional beliefs except when there is an infant in the home. In general, the majority of men and women believed that a mother of an infant should not work outside the home (item 6). There was more uncertainty about whether a mother of a preschool child should be employed outside the home (item 7). All groups rejected the idea that a mother of a school-aged child should not work outside the home (item 8). While there were no significant differences between Japanese and Caucasian groups on any of these items, relatively higher percentages of Caucasian women rejected all three statements. It could be that Caucasian women feel more strongly about liberation issues and individual freedom of choice.

Traditionally, women's role also involved support of men. Indeed, sometimes women were considered responsible for their men's emotional health and self concept. Whether women's employment might have harmful effects on their men has been studied (Hoffman & Nye, 1974). According to tradition, wives were not supposed to work outside the home because of potential harmful effects on husbands. The results of this study show that college students tend to reject these traditional views. The majority (82-92 percent) of all groups disagreed with a statement that "a wife should not work outside the home because it would make her husband feel 'less of a man'" (item 9). No significant differences were found between Japanese and Caucasian groups.

According to traditional beliefs, a wife should not be employed outside the home because of possible harmful effects on her marriage

(see Hoffman & Nye, 1974, for a review of related research). Tradition appears to be reflected in the results of this study. Thirty-six percent of Japanese men and 38 percent of Caucasian men agreed that "difficulties are likely to arise in marital adjustment when the wife works" (item 10). Significantly ($p < .01$) more Caucasian women (45 percent) than Japanese women (21 percent) agreed with this item. Nevertheless, with the exception of Caucasian women, more of each group disagreed than agreed with this belief. Thus, only a minority of each group still believe that employment of wives has negative consequences for marriage.

The results of chi-square tests comparing Japanese and Caucasian American college student beliefs regarding men's roles, role sharing, and male/female abilities and equality are summarized in Table 2. Japanese and Caucasian men were found to differ significantly ($p < .05$) on three of ten items, while Japanese and Caucasian women were found to differ significantly on five of ten items.

Insert Table 2 about here

According to American traditions, a man was supposed to be the "breadwinner" of his family. He was expected to financially support his wife and children. The results of this research suggest that American college women now reject this traditional aspect of male

roles, while college men are uncertain about it. In response to item 1, "the man of the house should be the primary source of financial support for the family," the majority of women (53-59 percent) indicated that they disagreed, while men (38-39 percent) tended to be uncertain. No significant differences were found between Japanese and Caucasian groups on this item.

According to traditional views of masculinity, men are supposed to dislike, and to some extent be unsuitable for housework and childcare. A significantly ($p < .05$) higher proportion of Caucasian men than Japanese men believed that "most men would find housework and childcare boring" (item 2). While more men (indeed, the majority of Caucasian men) tended to agree than disagree, more women tended to disagree than agree with this statement. Similarly, Caucasian and Japanese men were found to differ significantly ($p < .05$) on item 3, "most men would enjoy housework and childcare if they gave it a try." While more Caucasian men disagreed than agreed, more Japanese men, and more Caucasian and Japanese women, agreed than disagreed. Thus Caucasian men appear to be more "traditional" in their views of housework and childcare. To the extent that men's participation in housework and childcare is influenced by such attitudes, Japanese men may participate more than Caucasian men; and women may want their men to participate more than men do participate. Now, as more men share in housework and childcare, they may discover that such activities can be interesting rather than boring.

The majority (61 - 70 percent) of all groups agreed that "most

men would feel guilty about being a househusband because they would not be financially supporting their family" (item 4). There was less consensus regarding whether "the role of househusband would typically result in some loss of masculinity for the man" (item 5). There appeared to be more tendency among women (62 - 70 percent) than among men (49 - 50 percent) to reject this idea. Caucasian women were significantly ($p < .05$) more certain than were Japanese women that househusband roles would not result in a loss of masculinity.

In general, all groups tended to reject the idea that "having a father who is a househusband would have a harmful effect on a child's development" (item 6). No significant differences were found between Japanese and Caucasian groups on this item.

Forty-nine to 56 percent of each group disagreed with item 7, "I would enjoy being a full-time househusband or housewife if my spouse were the breadwinner." Such findings are consistent with others (i.e., Table 1, items 3 & 4) that suggest that homemaking is not valued very highly in contemporary America. On the other hand, the fact that 29 to 33 percent of men in this study said they would enjoy being a full-time househusband is at least interesting and may be an indication of changes in men's view of their own ideal roles. A significantly ($p < .05$) larger proportion of Caucasian women (43 percent) than Japanese women (25 percent) agreed that they would enjoy being a full-time housewife.

The majority (89 - 98 percent) of each group agreed that "responsibilities for the care of house and children should be

shared by husband and wife" (item 8). A significant ($p < .05$) difference was found between Japanese and Caucasian women, with Japanese women appearing to want relatively more sharing of responsibilities than Caucasian women.

The majority of Caucasian men, and Japanese and Caucasian women did not believe that "women are naturally better suited for housework and childcare than are men" (item 9). Japanese men were less certain about this issue. For both men and women, significantly ($p < .05$) greater proportions of Caucasians than Japanese rejected this belief.

A significantly ($p < .05$) greater proportion of Caucasian (48 percent) than Japanese women (25 percent) believed that "women and men should have equal rights and responsibilities . . . to the point of being drafted and serving in combat military units" (item 10). Only 29 to 33 percent of men agreed with this item.

It is not quite clear from the results whether contemporary Japanese American beliefs regarding male and female roles reflect Japanese cultural traditions or the realities of nearly 100 years of life and work in America. Japanese men were found to be relatively less traditional than Caucasian men in their beliefs regarding women's place (being limited to) the home. This could be a reflection of the reality of Japanese American experience wherein women have been employed outside the home for economic reasons. On the other hand, Japanese men were also found to be more uncertain than Caucasian men about working women's homemaking and childcare responsibilities, sex differences in abilities related to homemaking

and childcare, and men's capacity for enjoyment of homemaking and childcare. It may be that Japanese American men have been influenced less by the Women's Liberation Movement, perhaps because of cultural traditions, and that their greater uncertainty on these issues is a reflection of change in the direction of greater egalitarianism as has been found for Caucasian men in other studies.

Japanese women were found to be relatively less traditional than Caucasian women in their beliefs regarding women's capacity to handle the responsibilities of both career and home, potential effects of wife's employment on marital adjustment, their own potential for enjoying the role of a full-time housewife, and shared roles in marriage. Again, this probably reflects their experience of life and observations of parents and grandparents in America more than traditional Japanese ideals. On the other hand, Japanese women tended to be more uncertain than Caucasian women in their beliefs regarding effects of househusband roles on masculinity. And Japanese women were found to be relatively more traditional than Caucasian women in their beliefs regarding women's primary responsibilities, comparative male/female suitability for housework and childcare, and equal rights and responsibilities. It appears that the Japanese American woman's observation and experience of working in America has "liberated" her attitudes regarding women's work outside the home, while she has maintained some aspects of traditional Japanese views of sex differences and responsibilities.

Any conclusions and generalizations from the results of this study should take into account various limitations in the data.

Data based on college student samples may not be generalizable to other groups. Similarly, results and conclusions based on data on Japanese and Caucasian Americans from Hawaii may not necessarily be generalizable to all mainland Japanese and Caucasian Americans.

Conclusion

In general, both Japanese and Caucasian groups (men and women) were found to reject traditional beliefs regarding women's place in the home, working women's primary responsibilities, comparative interest and stimulation value of work vs. home, women's abilities to handle responsibilities of both career and home, mothers' freedom to work once children go to school, effects of wife's employment on husband, effects of role reversal on children, and shared responsibilities in marriage. On the other hand, all groups held traditional beliefs regarding the importance of the breadwinning role to the average man. There was more uncertainty within groups and disagreement between groups regarding employment of mothers of infants and preschoolers, effects of wife's employment on marital adjustment, men's breadwinning roles, men's potential for housework and childcare, relative interest and suitability for housework and childcare, and equal rights and responsibilities for women.

Japanese and Caucasian men were found to differ significantly in their beliefs regarding: women's place in the home, working women's homemaking and childcare responsibilities, sex differences in abilities related to homemaking and childcare, and men's capacity

for enjoyment of homemaking and childcare. Japanese and Caucasian women were found to differ significantly in their beliefs regarding: women's capacity to handle the responsibilities of both career and home, potential effects of wife's employment on marital adjustment, their own potential for enjoying the role of a full-time housewife, shared roles in marriage, potential effects of househusband roles on masculinity, women's primary responsibilities, comparative male/female suitability for housework and childcare, and equal rights and responsibilities.

Japanese American beliefs and attitudes towards male and female roles can be seen as reflecting both traditional Japanese ideals and the realities of early immigrant life and work in America.

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Table 1. Japanese and Caucasian American College Student Beliefs Regarding Women's Roles

Sex Role Beliefs	MEN					WOMEN				
	Japanese (N = 90)		Caucasian (N = 42)		Chi-square (df = 2)	Japanese (N = 154)		Caucasian (N = 57)		Chi-square (df = 2)
	%A	%D	%A	%D		%A	%D	%A	%D	
1. Women's place is (or should be) in the home.	0	69	13	64	11.45**	2	84	7	77	2.91
2. Wives and mothers should take primary responsibility for the care of house and children, even when they work outside the home.	25	44	26	64	6.81*	20	62	14	82	7.07*
3. The working world is more exciting and stimulating than staying home.	55	23	51	18	1.04	52	21	55	23	0.37
4. Wives/mothers should work outside the home because housework and childcare are too routine.	38	31	36	44	2.30	45	29	45	39	2.59
5. Wives/mothers should not work outside the home because they cannot handle the responsibilities of both home and career.	7	81	5	82	0.19	6	83	18	73	6.65*
6. A mother should not work (outside the home) if there is an infant in the home.	58	23	56	23	0.05	55	23	45	39	4.11
7. A mother should not work (outside the home) if there is a preschool child in the home.	39	31	36	31	0.19	36	39	34	50	2.21
8. A mother should not work (outside the home) if there is a school-age child in the home.	11	57	18	54	1.26	15	57	7	75	4.76
9. A wife should not work outside the home because it would make her husband feel "less of a man."	2	84	8	82	2.19	2	92	5	91	1.02
10. Difficulties are likely to arise in marital adjustment when the wife works.	36	46	38	46	0.15	21	60	45	41	10.76**

Note, response alternatives included "agree," "uncertain" and "disagree." "%A" indicates the percentage of subjects that agreed with a given item. "%D" indicates the percentage of subjects that disagreed with a given item. Agree and disagree percentages do not always sum to 100 because of uncertain responses.

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Table 2. Japanese and Caucasian American College Student Beliefs Regarding Men and Women's Roles

Sex Role Beliefs	MEN					WOMEN				
	Japanese (N = 90)		Caucasian (N = 42)		Chi-square (df = 2)	Japanese (N = 154)		Caucasian (N = 57)		Chi-square (df = 2)
	%A	%D	%A	%D		%A	%D	%A	%D	
1. The man of the house should be the primary source of financial support for the family.	36	25	36	26	0.01	31	53	20	59	2.07
2. Most men would find housework and childcare boring.	38	26	54	36	8.64*	21	40	30	43	2.68
3. Most men would enjoy housework and childcare if they gave it a try.	25	20	31	38	6.98*	48	8	41	20	5.01
4. Most men would feel guilty about being a househusband because they would not be financially supporting their family.	70	17	64	15	1.12	61	16	61	25	2.81
5. The role of househusband would typically result in some loss of masculinity for the man.	29	50	23	49	0.83	17	62	25	70	6.81*
6. Having a father who is a househusband would have a harmful effect on a child's development.	13	55	13	64	1.15	7	73	5	91	4.83
7. I would enjoy being a full-time househusband or housewife if my spouse were the breadwinner.	29	50	33	49	0.37	25	56	43	50	7.58*
8. Responsibilities for the care of house and children should be shared by husband and wife.	94	1	97	3	2.20	98	1	89	7	8.55*
9. Women are naturally better suited for housework and childcare than are men.	31	37	33	56	7.46*	20	60	14	80	6.40*
10. Women and men should have equal rights and responsibilities, even to the point of being drafted and serving in combat military units.	29	40	33	44	0.84	25	39	48	25	8.79*

Note, response alternatives included "agree," "uncertain" and "disagree." "%A" indicates the percentage of subjects that agreed with a given item. "%D" indicates the percentage of subjects that disagreed with a given item. Agree and disagree percentages do not always sum to 100 because of uncertain responses.

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

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